

Fortune Is Long Delayed When a Young Couple Seek Success Among the Prospectors for Oil.

ALTHEA wondered if she still loved her husband. It was one of those gray days that come as often in March as in November. And there was, besides, the mud, red mud, the mud of the oil country. It had been raining for a week now, and the roads were almost impassable. Close to the house the earth was red. In the middle distance it was brown. On the horizon it changed somehow to gray. The sky was gray. Life was gray. Althea was doing the breakfast dishes.

Jimmy—she wished somehow she hadn't learned to call him Jimmy—hadn't learned to call him Jimmy. Jimmy had somehow seemed so nice and familiar a name when she had known him only a few weeks. But now that she had married five years, she wished she had learned to call him Jim. The name Jim had more dignity, more character, more force. Jimmy was playing with Alice and Bobby in the next room. Alice was two and Bobby four. And Jimmy might be well, six—instead of a grown man, somebody you could depend on.

Althea stole a look at her husband and her two children through the open door of the kitchen. Jimmy was actually sitting cross-legged on the floor between them building with their blocks. He was building a tower, the tallest tower that would stand. Alice and Bobby watched breathlessly while the tower trembled. It recovered itself. It stood. Jimmy selected another wooden cube and delicately set it in place on top of the others. The tower trembled, swayed, fell. Some of the blocks shot half way across the room. And all three of them laughed aloud as if something quite splendid had happened.

Althea turned back to her dishpan. It was nice—his liking the children. But he was only a child himself; that was why he did. He would never really do anything. They would always live in this house, on this farm, at the edge of town. And what a town! Lodi! Why there wasn't a person, not even Old Man Toland, who had started it, whose one ambition wasn't to get away from it, to go somewhere else. But she would never get anywhere else. Jimmy was too slow, too cautious.

Althea had believed in him when she married him. He had inherited some money from his father, and the real estate office and this farm. It had seemed a great start—Jimmy had been quietly boastful about what he was going to do with such a start. He was going to make money in land.

"Why?" he had said, "in five years I'll be worth \$20,000. Maybe forty thousand. We'll move to Kansas City. We might—we might even go to Chicago."

"Anything can happen in the oil country," Jimmy had said slowly. "I'll take time. It will take five years." Althea had laughed at that. What was five years to her—when she had Jimmy! It had been five years now. And they were just where they were in the oil country. Jimmy was twenty-eight now. Her youth was slipping away from her—her chance.

ALTHEA wiped the dishes mechanically, and a fancy began to grow in her mind, a day dream. She fancied herself rescued from this life in the oil country, rescued by a dashing stranger. She smiled defensively when the phrase "dashing stranger" came into her mind. She would not have said it to any one in the world. But she would think of it. She couldn't help thinking of it. And she began to picture the kind of man he would be: a masterful man, a man to whom you couldn't say no; a man who got what he wanted and gave you what you wanted.

She heard the telephone bell faintly, as if it were far off. Instead of only in the next room. It rang one long and two short—their ring. But Jimmy would answer it. He was answering it. She heard his soft, drawing speech.

The man who would rescue her would speak quickly, decisively, as if he expected to be obeyed. Althea listened to Jimmy's speech as he talked into the telephone without being conscious of the words she spoke. How could any one think twice about a man who talked like that—as if he didn't care whether he had his own way or not? He always thought he was going to put over a deal. But he never did—unless it was a little deal. He had been a whisper that they had struck oil over toward Clinton, on the edge of the county. Jimmy had talked about it for a week. He had even gone over to Clinton to look around. He hadn't done anything about it. Other men would go in there and make money.

Jimmy put up the receiver and came out into the kitchen. He took down his coat and hat so quickly that Althea regarded him with a faint surprise. It was not like him to move so quickly.

"Well, Althea," he said, "guess I'll have to crank up the flivver. Got to go over to Sharon."

Althea asked.

Althea watched her husband go out to the barn. The mare thrust her head out of the open window of her box at his approach. Her ears were pricked forward eagerly, and she whinnied softly. Jimmy put his arm around her neck while she nuzzled in his pocket for sugar. Then he cranked the flivver and drove neatly out of the yard.

Althea moved quickly about her kitchen setting it to rights. She was wearing a pink gingham apron, clean and crisp. Her step was crisp too. But she remembered her day-dream—the dream of the dashing stranger—and as she went deeper and deeper into the dream her step became more languorous, until she was quite lost to the world around her.

A SHARP knock on the kitchen door aroused her. She stiffened ever so slightly and opened the door. There he stood. He was a tall man, young, but older than she was, with a keen face and a quick smile. He was wearing the rough clothes and high boots of a driller. But she saw instantly that he wasn't a driller—an engineer, perhaps, or an expert in one of the big oil companies. It was in the way he wore his clothes, the poise of his body, the look in his eyes. He had the manner—the manner she had been dreaming about. It was as if the dashing stranger had actually come.

"Hello, there," he said—and when he said the words they were not too familiar, only friendly, as if they had known each other before. "My car is stuck in the mud—may I borrow a couple of those planks you've got out there by the barn?"

"Why, yes, of course," Althea said. She was not quite free of her dream, all right, but she was giving it up in order to deal with an actual man. He smiled at her, and his eyes swept past her and surveyed her shining kitchen.

"Don't tell me," he said—and his smile was boyishly engaging—"don't tell me there is some coffee left in that pot on the stove."

Althea smiled back at him. "Are you hungry?" she asked.

"You bet I am," he said. "I haven't eaten since last night."

"I'll get you something to eat," Althea said. He was the kind of man she had been dreaming about. "That's awfully good of you," he said. "I'll have a try at the car."

"I'll call you when breakfast is ready."

He went off to the barn for the planks, and Althea put water on to boil. She was glad she was wearing the pink gingham; she was glad she knew how to get a breakfast that a man like that would appreciate.

Althea laid a clean cloth on the small table in the kitchen and got out cream and new-laid eggs and strawberry jam and cut some thin slices of ham. She made fresh coffee and toast and broiled the ham. When everything was ready except the eggs she went to the front of the house and looked out. His car was a powerful roadster, so heavy that she wondered how he had got it that far in the mud. While she watched, he got in and drove it out of the hole on the planks. Althea opened the front door to call him.

The plan came striding up the walk and paused. He looked at his hands ruefully and then down at his muddy boots.

Althea pointed to the iron boot-scraper that was screwed to the lowest step. She watched him while he led the mud off and then she led the way into the kitchen and gave him a clean towel, and while he washed his hands and face at the sink she poured the eggs and made the dish Jimmy was so fond of—a piece of toast and a slice of ham and a poached egg.

The man looked at the table and from the table to Althea. His look was a compliment and a caress and a question, all in one.

"How," he asked, as he sat down, "do you happen to be here?"

Althea flushed under his gaze.

"How," she asked, boldly, "do you happen to be here?"

The man helped himself to a piece of toast.

"That's simple," he said. "I go where the oil is, whether it's to Mexico or the Black Sea—or here."

Althea had a picture of him, following the trail the world around, by ship and train and car and horse. He was a soldier of fortune. That was his air.

"I read you going to eat with me?" he asked.

Althea sat down at the table.

"I've had my breakfast," she said. The man rose quickly, got a cup and saucer from the shelf, and set it down in front of her. He poured out coffee at breakfast.

"It must be—sort of—glorious," she said musingly. "To go about the world like that."



"HE SAID THE MARE WAS HIS AND I SAID SHE WAS MINE. I HAD A GUN, SO I GOT THE MARE."

Althea said. "He doesn't like her to be out in the mud."

"He said he wouldn't take six hundred dollars for her," Althea protested. The man fumbled at his belt.

"That's the kind of horse I want," he said. He drew out a long chain of money belt and laid it on the table. "I'll give you seven hundred," he said. He opened the snap that closed

a pocket in the belt and took out bills.

Althea saw that they were hundred-dollar bills. She took a deep breath. She had always resented Jimmy's spending so much money on the mare. She had even resented his caring so much for it. Jimmy would be angry. But she did want the seven hundred dollars. She wanted even more to help this man, who

must get to Sharon in a hurry. But what would Jimmy say?

"Here," the man said. He held out a sheaf of bills. "Make it eight hundred."

Althea looked into his eyes. She had suddenly no fear of what Jimmy would say. She took the bills and tucked them in her blouse.

"Very well," she said. They walked out to the barn together. Althea pointed out the

saddle and bridle. The man saddled the mare with quick, expert hands.

The mare whinnied and pawed the stable door. She was tired of her stall. The man held the reins in the crook of his arm and smiled at Althea.

"Althea," he said. "Althea," he repeated slowly, caressing the syllables. "It's a good name for you, star-eyes."

Prospective D.C. Home Maker Hunts Way to Live on Expert Budget Plan

Gets Prevailing Prices for Items Required if She Is to Become Wife of \$1,340-a-Year Government Clerk and Give Up Her Own Job at \$15 a Week—Discouraging Search for Living Quarters at Rate Suggested—Food and Furniture Investigated—Part-Time Labor and Home Work Considered as Possibilities.

BY THE GOOSE GIRL.

FIFTEEN-DOLLAR-A-WEEK girl typist and a \$1,340-a-year government clerk may marry and live happily ever after.

That is stated on the authority of the Housekeepers' Alliance home budget plan. The way to turn the trick is this, says the girl who should give up her regular job and take what she can get for the first eighteen months. The husband should expect to help with the cooking and the care of the apartment. A division of labor is possible, letting him do the work he likes best. The idea of a family is not necessarily to be taboo. After all, a family comes only once at a time, and as a provision for the first one the expert points out that the prospective mother will need practically nothing to wear for almost a year. The saving thus effected is assumed to cover the cost of clothing for the new member of society. As between housing and housekeeping, the latter state is to be preferred.

A savings account of 10 per cent must be subtracted from the regular income, the expert says, leaving a working income of \$1,206, which is to be divided into five equal parts for food, shelter, clothing, operating expenses and development. That is the home budget expert's theory.

The allotment indicated provides \$20 a month for each of these needs, and while not elastic in the sum total, permits—so the expert says—borrowing from clothing and development to supply the expenses of food and shelter.

An apartment consisting of two rooms, kitchenette and use of a bath, in the opinion of the expert, might be secured for \$20 or a little more. To get that it would be necessary to go into the suburbs, she says, in that case car fare at the rate of at least 16 cents a day or about \$50 a year must be allowed for the husband going to and from work. Breakfast and dinner are supposed to be eaten at home, cooked by the wife. If the husband cares to help, so much the better. If he likes to cook that is desirable. He should expect to carry a sandwich with him for his noon lunch.

Incidental expenses, such as church dues, education (books and magazines, study to increase the husband's earning capacity and home economics for the wife), health, entertaining,

vacation, personal expenses and household equipment are classed under development. All that is to be taken care of with \$20 a month.

Operating expenses include heat, light, gas for cooking, ice, labor, laundry and equipment repairs. The item of the wife's labor in this connection makes an interesting study in relation to the typist's wage-earning capacity.

Food, provided for on an allotment of \$20 a month, figures out about 70 cents a day to feed the happy pair.

The Goose Girl, projecting marriage on the Housekeepers' Alliance home budget plan, took a second thought and considered going back to her job. Then she decided to make a few investigations. Shelter is the first consideration.

A real estate man, the first one visited, produced a list of apartments ranging from \$50 to \$100 a month. There was only one exception—two rooms and a bath for \$37.50. But that was \$17.50 too high for the Goose Girl. Another dealer had nothing lower than \$62.50, and still another offered his lowest apartment for \$70. The girl's plight was finally met with the suggestion of a two-family house in an obscure quarter, one floor of which might be had for \$37.50. He knew of nothing cheaper, he said.

Going far, on the expert's advice, a Cherrydale, Va., apartment was found for \$43.50. The nearest to the expert's allotment was a flat without heat for \$25, but with coal at its present price this was out of the question.

The girl had saved \$500 out of several years' typewriting. Hoover's "Better Home Movement" suggested a way out—to build a low nest of one's own—and so a building association was visited. There it was explained that no property valued at less than \$3,000 was considered for a loan, and that it would be necessary first to present the plans for the dwelling which, if approved by the association, would be considered as security for a loan of three-fourths the amount. The terms, stated in detail, provided that in eleven and one-half years the home might be paid for.

"But," with crushing effect the man on the other side of the desk added, "we are not making any loans just now."

He refused to say when they would be in a position to do so.

The girl left to go farther in her home-building quest, and pausing on

the corner, was accosted by a voice at her elbow saying: "Pardon me, miss, I don't want to butt in, but I heard you talking in there."

It was a young man, a prospective home owner like herself. "Don't let them put you off," he continued. "It is mighty discouraging, but keep at it. Go to another building association, and if they won't make a loan, ask them for the name of some one who will. Take this. I just got it from there."

"This" was a building association booklet, in which the girl read: "Suppose a shareholder has saved \$500 and he finds a suitable house, worth perhaps \$2,700, that, for cash, he can secure for \$2,500. He obtains \$2,000 from the association . . . and purchases a house."

THE girl presented herself at the secretary's window, indicated what she had read in the booklet and signified her desire to carry out the proposed arrangement for a loan.

"That will not work out at present," said the man. "As a matter of fact, it never has worked. Anyway, we are not making any loans just now; we are out of funds. Perhaps after New Year we may have some money to loan, but not now, in home-building projects. No, I don't know of any one who will make a loan for home building. My advice to you is to buy a home outright, make a cash payment and pay monthly installments."

Reflecting that such a course required provision for taxes, fuel and light, the girl was disheartened. She thought of all the handsome big apartment houses in Washington just built but still unoccupied, yet not any money anywhere to build.

Then once more she took up the weary search for an apartment. Finally, she found two rooms and a bath, unfurnished, for \$27.50 a month. That, still \$7.50 in advance of the expert's allotment, was located in a poor neighborhood, the facilities for housekeeping, moreover, restricted to light housekeeping—something like ready-cooked cereal for breakfast, lunch away from home, and for dinner in the evening a dish snatched from a delicatessen.

But the apartment had to be furnished. With kitchen requisites, the total cost of furniture for this apart-

ment amounted to \$132.95. However, as all these things may be purchased on the monthly installment plan, they could be secured for an initial payment of \$75 and monthly payments of \$143 for one year, the latter to be included in operating expenses.

The home budget bureau expert's idea that the man might help with the cooking was not the idea of Miss Emma F. Jacobs, head of the domestic science department of the public schools. She says that very few boys elect to take cooking lessons, so unless a girl were looking for a first-class moron as a husband she would expect little help in the kitchen from the man she married.

With a grave doubt in her mind regarding the allotment of 70 cents a day for food for two persons, the Goose Girl visited a low-price food supply store to learn the prevailing prices, which, moreover, could be had only if one carried home the provisions, a tax on time and energy obviously of account in the experience of a girl wife and prospective mother whose wage-earning must be depended upon to help eke out the family income.

THE home-budget expert, by no one knows what arrangement, figured on the girl wife engaging in the maternal role not earlier than one and one-half years after marriage. The girl, however, found it practical to visit a hospital and get some estimates on motherhood economically determined. There she learned that it is necessary to provide \$58.50 for hospital expenses, presupposing a normal case, and no extras, such as druggists' supplies, etc. This estimate, she learned, was augmented by the cost of a bed in a ward and the services of a corridor nurse. It includes infant's clothing for the fourteen days spent in the hospital, but there is still the layette needed when the mother and her baby go home. Prenatal care, now deemed essential, is an added expense. By applying to the Associated Charities and establishing the status of a charity case one may secure a special rate covering all hospital expenses for about \$50. That does not include prenatal care. But what American girl would voluntarily descend to the pauper level to cover the cost of mothering a United States government worker's child?

During the first eighteen months

Althea looked into his eyes in spite of herself. For a moment she swayed a little, dismayed by the sudden uprush of feeling in herself, and then his arm was around her and his face was bent to hers. He kissed her, and she kissed him back.

"If I have any luck today," he whispered, "I'll come back for you."

Althea shook her head.

"No," she said. "You will never come back. And if you did—I shouldn't see you." "We'll see about that," he said confidently.

"No," said Althea. "I shall never see you again—but I'm glad you came this once."

He moved as if to kiss her again. But she shook her head, her lips set primly, and stepped back.

"No, go," she said.

He led the mare through the stable door and swung into the saddle.

"Good-bye," said Althea. The mare whinnied, broke into a canter. He was gone.

ALTHEA went back into the house and gave the children their lunch and put them down for their nap and set her kitchen to rights again. Once she laughed at herself for being such a fool, and twice she shook herself, as if to free herself from her memory of the thing that had happened. She was surprised at herself. She was not a fool. But she wasn't sorry it would never happen again. And then the tears came to her eyes. She felt so sorry for herself because it never would happen again, because it was already like a dream!

Her mind ran on things she had never experienced, places she had never seen, delights she had never known. She thought of dinner parties and dances and the opera. She thought of clothes, of lustrous silks and soft furs and lovely colors.

Do what she would, she could not recall herself wholly to common-sense, to the reality she knew and must go on with. She told herself that Jimmy was very dear, and the children and this little house of hers. She cared about them. She cared very deeply. It was only now that she knew how deeply she cared about them. Only—

What was it that was lacking? It was, of course, the thing the stranger had brought. But what was that?

She was still asking herself that question when she put the children to bed for the night. She sat for a long time in the dark, going over and over it while they were asleep. She lay awake for a long time after she had gone to bed, pondering it.

At dawn she awoke with a sudden start of fear. Jimmy hadn't come home. And then she remembered the dashing stranger. She had been dreaming of him again. But he was gone—gone forever. He must never come back. She must never think of him again. She had been very silly.

She realized that she was cold. She got up and found her dressing gown and slippers and stood in the window. It was not yet light. She wondered if she loved Jimmy after all.

She wished Jimmy would come home. She wasn't worried about him. She was just wondering where he was and how he was getting on. He always stayed overnight. He never worried about him. She only wished that he would worry a little more—about everything.

Perhaps he was worried. Perhaps that was why he was so slow—so cautious. She did not want a cautious man. She wanted a man who was so sure of himself and of the value of his errand that when he got stuck in the mud he would pull out of it and pay it over for a horse with which to go on. A man who had the will to do the daring thing—

She thought she heard something in the distance. She peered into the misty dawn. She saw a horse and a rider. She was lifting now, and she could see a long way. But there was nothing. She sank back against the window-casing, her head resting against it.

She saw a man coming down the road, leading a horse. It was Jimmy. And the horse's legs were banded. It must be her mare, she looked closer. It was Jimmy leading the mare home.

What had happened? What did he know? What should she say?

ALTHEA ran downstairs and opened the shafts of the kitchen range. He would be hungry. She heard him opening the barn door. There was a long silence while the water came to a boil. She knew what Jimmy was doing as well as if she could see him through the wall of the barn. He was taking off the bandages and scraping the mud down, and putting a light blanket on her, and bedding her down with clean straw, and giving her oats.

Althea set the breakfast table hurriedly—got out eggs and ham and jam and cream. She had not finished when Jimmy walked into the kitchen. "What," he said, "up already?"

"I woke early," she said. "And I saw you coming down the road just now."

"Gosh, I'm hungry," he said. "Took me pretty near all night to walk it. The mud was a real tussle, too."

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She stared at him fearfully. He looked tired; but there was a glint in his eye—some sign of triumph.

Althea got the breakfast on the table, exactly the same breakfast as she had given the dashing stranger less than twenty-four hours before. Jimmy sat down and ate. She sat opposite him. But she could not eat. He was somehow different. Was the change in him, or in her feeling about him?

At last he leaned back and lit a cigarette.

"How did he get the mare?" Jimmy asked.

"I sold her to him," Althea said. She held her breath with fear of what he would say next.

"What?" he cried.

"For eight hundred dollars," Althea said.

She went to the cupboard and got the bills, eight of them, from the pitcher on the top shelf, and laid them on the table in front of him.

Jimmy grinned, his grin broadened into a laugh, he laughed heartily. Althea looked at him in wonder and in fear.

"Gosh," said Jimmy, "that's rich. But I don't understand," Althea said.

Jimmy rose to his feet.

"I'll have to get that money back to him some time," he said, and tucked the bills into his pocket. "You see, I thought, of course, he had stolen the mare. I was stuck in the mud up here near Sharon, and he came along and I held him up. He said the mare was his, and I said she was mine. He had a gun—so I got the mare." He paused to grin again.

"No wonder he was mad," Jimmy said to himself. He took his wallet out of his coat pocket.

"But here's what I've got to tell you, Althea," he said. He looked at her gravely. "You've stuck for five years now in this place and you haven't said much—but I know how hard it's been to wait. And it must have seemed to you sometimes as if nothing would ever happen."

He paused to look at her. She could not meet his eyes.

"Well," he continued, "something has happened. I got there first today."

He took out four legal documents—oil leases.

Perhaps he was tapping them. "There is \$50,000—maybe more, but anyway \$50,000. We can go somewhere. We can go anywhere you like."

She looked at him for a moment as if she did not understand the meaning of his words. She had a blinding sense that she did not know him at all, that she had never known him. But she wanted to know him. She wanted to know him more than anything else in the world.

"Gosh, Jimmy," she said, and put both arms around his neck.

It was the first time she had ever called him Jim.

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of married life, at least, the girl wife should expect to continue in a gainful occupation, according to the home budget expert; that is, in order to have money to cover the expense of maternity. The search for work under such conditions becomes almost entirely a process of elimination. Typing was the best paid work that the girl could do. But the natural conditions of approaching maternity rendered an office job of typing of short duration. Therefore she deemed it more advantageous to consider homework, which, if paid at a lower rate, could in the nature of her situation be expected to produce practically the full time while she awaited the coming of the child. A woman's exchange was suggested. But the typist, who had gone from the eighth grade to business school, had not been taught to cook or sew. She could produce nothing that sells in the woman's exchange.

Her necessities might have forced her to consider some of the numerous advertised opportunities for part-time domestic service. But again she was balked because she did not know how to cook or sew or housework.

She had heard of women typing at home. Then a survey of the advertisements in the daily paper revealed only one such prospect—to address envelopes for a Chicago corporation—hardly practical for a Washington housewife. Other homework propositions advertised were likewise in remote places—such as in Ohio, another in New York, and so on.

Canvassing was out of the question, for the same reason as office work. New courage came from reading an advertisement promising that "women can quickly learn real estate business and receive pay while learning; need not interfere with other employment; some making \$100 a week." Free class lectures were announced and the girl went gladly to learn the real estate business. She might even in time learn how to produce cheap rents. But the first lecture was disillusioning. The idea offered was to buy a suburban lot oneself in that way to learn real estate. Then oratory was prescribed as an indispensable accompaniment of the real estate business. The lecturer said one must learn how to talk a lot and keep up a good appearance. He recommended standing in front of a mirror every night and morning and talking to oneself until one looked pleased in the eye and believed all one said. To get plenty of words he advised learning Lincoln's Gettysburg address by heart and saying it fast and strong at least once a day in front of a mirror.

That was all very different from the Goose Girl's expectations of the real estate business. She pictured it a refining job suitable for a prospective mother, driving about in a closed car and, for the rest, practically collecting commissions. Oratory frightened her. After all, maternity seemed hopelessly to conflict with a girl's wage earning, anyhow. Once more the Goose Girl concluded that she might better stick to typing and let matrimony alone, the home budget expert to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Fossil Raindrops."

IN slabs of Triassic rock little depressions are often seen that have been called "fossil raindrops." The idea being that they were formed by showers on muddy sea beaches, and preserved by being covered with a layer of mud at the next high tide.

But lately it has been suggested, in view of observations on a flood plain in the Des Moines valley, that the supposed raindrops of the Triassic may really be due to p